



Gingersnap

Patricia Reilly Giff

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It's 1944, W.W. II is raging. Jayna's big brother Rob is her only family. When Rob is called to duty on a destroyer, Jayna is left in their small town in upstate New York with their cranky landlady. But right before he leaves, Rob tells Jayna a secret: they may have a grandmother in Brooklyn. Rob found a little blue recipe book with her name and an address for a bakery. When Jayna learns that Rob is missing in action, she's devastated. Along with her turtle Theresa, the recipe book, and an encouraging, ghostly voice as her guide, Jayna sets out for Brooklyn in hopes of finding the family she so desperately needs.

Gingersnap Details

Date : Published January 8th 2013 by Wendy Lamb Books (first published January 1st 2013)

ISBN : 9780375938917

Author : Patricia Reilly Giff

Format : Hardcover 160 pages

Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Family, Childrens, Juvenile, Middle Grade, Fiction

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From Reader Review Gingersnap for online ebook

Laura says

Jayna and her brother Rob have finally created a peaceful life after their parents were killed in a tragic accident. When Rob is shipped out on a Navy ship during World War II, a kindly but difficult neighbor takes Jayna in. During this time, Jayna cares for a turtle in her pond and seeks help from an evasive but occasionally helpful ghost. Based on a family cookbook and a small hint from her brother, Jayna decides to go to Brooklyn to search for a long-lost grandmother after she learns that Rob is missing in action. Once there, she finds Gingersnaps, the bakery, and convinces Elise to take her in. She plays with the neighborhood children, occasionally calling home for updates and caring for her turtle. Eventually she confesses to Elise that she believes she is her grandmother. Elise is really Madeline and started the bakery with Elise years ago; this particular plot point seemed really weak and confusing to me -- why does Madeline use Elise's name? Finally, Rob is rescued and returns home, giving thanks to Jayna's ghosts encouragement.

There were several points that I didn't care for in the story. I didn't think that the voice was authentic. There was almost no slang in the story and the voice sounded fairly modern to me. I initially liked the idea of Jayna's friendly ghost helping her out and supporting her through a tough time but I ultimately found it just a distracting plot point. And finally, as I mentioned in my summary, I thought the Elise/Madeline name change up was strange and not explained very well.

Recommended for grades 4 - 6. This book will particularly appeal to readers interested in cooking and recipes. I also think that it will particularly attractive to student who dislike or get bogged down in historical fiction with more authenticity in language.

Anna says

I loved this book. Patricia Reilly Giff is one of my favorite Children's author. It is a great historical fiction read about a girl named Jayna during the second world war. All she has left is her brother and he is sent off to fight in the war. She is left staying with the land lady. Right before her brother leaves he tells her about a box in his closet with a recipe book in it. The recipe book has a picture and an address of a person who could be their grandmother. Jayna starts seeing a ghost right before her brother leaves. The ghost helps to guide her as things change in Jayna's life leading her to find out more about herself and her family. If you are looking for an excellent World War II historical fiction, you would enjoy this book.

Kathy says

Ok...this is a children's book and my daughters have advanced beyond this reading level...but I guess I have not. Pictures of Hollis Woods..Lily's Crossing...I loved reading these. When I read in a book review that Giff had a new book, I had to read it. I enjoyed reading Gingersnap. It was a good book, but it could have been a great book. Basically it is the story of a 10 year old girl who is in search of her grandmother, who may or may not exist. Jayna has one clue...a little recipe book. It is a similar storyline to "Bud, Not Buddy" and even to an extent "The Secret Life of Bees". Giff just did not develop the storyline. Conflicts and unknowns were resolved too quickly. It was enjoyable...and I do realize it is a children's book...but it could have been so

much better with more story development.

Susan Dunn says

I listened to this one, and I think I might have liked it better if I had just read it. I really didn't like the narrator at all. They used a young reader, and I think an adult would have gotten the dialog, and especially the accent that one character is supposed to speak with, much better. Bummer - this sounded really good and I was excited to read it.

It's 1945 and Jayna is sent to live with their landlady when her brother is sent to war. Every since he turned 18, Rob has taken care of Jayna (their parents died when she was small and she was raised in foster homes until Rob came for her). Before he leaves, Rob tells Jayna that there is a box of their parents' things hidden in his closet. Just in case he doesn't come back, he wants Jayna to know where they are. She can't help herself from snooping, and in the box she finds a recipe book written in French, but with a name and address in Brooklyn. Could his person somehow be related to her? Jayna decides to find out.

Cindy Dobrez says

I've been reading a lot of foodie books during my kitchen remodel. This historical fiction/ghost story qualifies. Gingersnap is a soup expert and her story is peppered with her soup recipes. This WWII home front story of a young girl suddenly alone when her brother is called to service will make a good booktalk for my 6th graders. The ghost element and longing for real family and the box turtle who needs a real home too will be an easy sell. The Brooklyn bakery setting is a bonus although I will probably have to remember to explain wartime rationing to the students. Running a bakery on limited sugar, butter and other extravagances during war time was not easy.

Lonna Pierce says

I listened to the audio book of this WW II-era historical fiction novel for young readers. Orphaned Jayna (nickname:Gingersnap)is left with a landlady when her older brother, Rob, goes to war in the Pacific. Jayna is a masterful soup maker, like her mother & grandmother before her, and soup recipes fill the book. She locates a family friend who owns a bakery in Brooklyn (named Gingersnap!)with the help of a ghost. That plot device doesn't really work. But the characters and the history of the suffering of those on the home front make this a worthwhile read.

Clover White says

I love most of Giff's books, and I enjoyed reading another one of her historical fiction books (R My Name Is Rachel), but this one was really not that great. The ghost was pointless, and I'm still stuck over the fact that, at the beginning of the book, the brother mentions casually that he has a box of mementos, including information about a possible grandmother, in his closet. Hello, marvelous older brother, maybe we should have EXPLORED that possibility before we set off for war, leaving our orphaned little sister alone in the

world?? The book just did not work.

Joy H. says

Added 8/14/18. (first published January 1st 2013.)

Read by Olivia Campbell

Category: Children's Middle Grade Historical Books | Children's Picture Books

<https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/bo...>

This was a sweet story to listen to.

I would have preferred less recipes but that was part of the story.

The narrator was very good.

I finished listening on August 14, 2018.

Alex (not a dude) Baugh says

It is 1944 and Jayna's big brother Rob, the only family she has, is a cook in the Navy. Jayna and Rob were separated for years, placed in separate foster homes after the automobile deaths of their parents. But when Rob turned 18, he got custody of Jayna. Only now Rob has received his orders to report to his ship for deployment to the war in the Pacific. Rob have made arrangements for Jayna to stay with thier landlady Celine for the time he is away.

Rob may be a great cook, but Jayna has a way with making homemade soup that even he can beat. Could this be a family talent? The night before he leaves, Rob tells Jayna he found a small blue recipe book with a name and an address in Brooklyn.

When a dreaded telegram arrives with news that Rob is missing in action, Jayna decides to find the recipe book. Inside, there is a picture of a woman standing in from of a shop called Gingersnap, the same name her mother used called her, or so Rob claimed. Jayna didn't remember her parents, who were killed in a car accident when she was very young. Unhappy at Celine's and feeling very alone in the world, Jayna packs up a few things, including Theresa, the turtle she takes care of, and set off early one morning to find what she hopes might be an unknown grandmother named Elise.

Accompanying her on the trip to Brooklyn is a ghostly presence, or at least part of one, who wears Jayna's pink nail polish and can read her thoughts. But she wasn't much help when Jayna takes the wrong train and ends up in Coney Island. Leaving Theresa and her suitcase on the boardwalk, she goes down to the water's edge. And naturally, the suitcase with the recipe book is stolen. But Jayna remembers the address and, in distress, take the train to find the store with the name Gingersnap.

Yes, it is exactly where it was supposed to be. And there is a kindly looking elderly lady behind the counter. Mustering up her courage and encouraged by her ghost, Jayna walks into the store and no sooner is she standing in front of the lady when she knocks a wedding cake of the counter.

Ready to give up, Jayna runs out the store's back door and hides in the overgrown garden there, falling asleep. When she wakes up, she is hungry, miserable and stiff. To make matters worse, now Theresa is

missing. But, seeing Elise in the back of the store making some dinner, Jayna shores up her courage and knocks on the door.

Will this kind lady be her grandmother? At last, a family member and a tie to her unknown parents? Maybe, maybe not.

You can't go wrong when you pick up a book by Patricia Reilly Giff to read and *Gingersnap* is no exception. The plot may be a little predictable, but the characters are believable and basically kind and caring, which is always nice to see in a novel. WWII was a chaotic time and all kinds of things happened that caused children to become orphans, so it was nice to see Jayna's desire and determination to be part of a family.

I loved reading all the little details Giff included in *Gingersnap*, and especially about my hometown Brooklyn in the war. The lackadaisical attitudes about school and Elise's difficulties running a bakery with all the shortages due to rationing are the kinds of real life details that go into making good historical fiction.

My very favorite part of the book is Jayna's soup recipes that are scattered throughout. Depending on what is going on in her life, Jayna prepares soups like "Don't Think About it Soup" or "Feel Better Vegetable Soup."

And about that ghost - when you read *Gingersnap* I think you will agree that this is not really a true blue ghost story and there is a perfectly reasonable explanation for her presence.

This is a great book about food, family, hope and courage, and whether you are or are not a Patricia Reilly Giff fan, one you will want to read.

This book is recommended for readers age 9+

This book was borrowed from the Webster Branch of the NYPL

Arlena says

Author: Patricia Reilly Giff

Published by: Wendy Lamb Books

Age Recommended: Children 10 +

Reviewed By: Arlena Dean

Book Blog For: GMTA

Rating: 5

Review:

"*Gingersnap*" by Patricia Reilly Giff was a very well written read that will give us some historical history that was going on during WWII. Along with this being a family read it does have some ghost issues. This author is a wonderful story teller being about to take you so a different time. This was during a time in history WWII when a brother (Rob) after becoming of age, had been taking care of his sister (Jayna) nicknamed 'Gingersnap.' Rob is called to duty and has to leave his dear sister who had once been in foster care, now in the care of a landlady, Celine. All was well until a tragedy happens to Rob's vessel sunk in the 'Battle of Okinawa' and once again Jayna is feeling alone. Jayna had been told by her brother about a 'cookbook' that had the name and address of a bakery called *Gingersnap*...so what will she do with this information? Is her brother alive and will they be united? Who is this owner of this bakery? What was the

ghost all about? What's up with the soups..."Don't Think About it Soup" or "Feel Better Vegetable Soup." This is where I way you must pick up this good read to see what all is going to happen with Jayna. All of these questions will be answered from your read. The characters were all well developed and interesting.

"Gingersnap" was a wonderful read of 'family, hope, courage and food.' Would I recommend this read? Yes! Be ready to enjoy a excellent read.

Angie Fehl says

After years of moving through a number of foster homes, orphaned Jayna finally gets the chance to live with her older brother, Rob, now old enough to become her legal guardian. While it might not always be the most financially comfortable situation in their home in upstate New York, they are happy to have each other. Then everything changes with the arrival of World War 2. Rob gets drafted, leaving his sister in the care of their landlady, Celine. Before he leaves, Rob mentions a recipe book he came across belonging to their French mother. Inside the recipe book, Rob had found a Brooklyn address, possibly that of their grandmother neither of them have met, Elise Martin.

After Rob's departure, Elise doesn't have much interest in sticking around with the landlady she believes doesn't like her much. She decides to set out on a journey to uncover the story behind the recipe book and who this Elise Martin really is, maybe even uncover some answers about Elise's parents, who were killed in a car crash when she was very young. Throughout the course of the story, Elise is surprised to receive guidance from an unnamed female ghost (the ghost doesn't remember her own identity either). One thing though, the ghost appears to have the ability to read Jayna's thoughts. This spirit also seems to like rifling through Jayna's clothes and using her nail polish without asking. Manners these days, I tell ya! So, added to the answers she wants to find for her own questions, Elise is also curious to find out the identity behind this disembodied voice. The ghost doesn't play a huge role in the story, at least not until near the end, but it was an enjoyable element of mystery for Giff to weave in.

In between the chapters are a few of Jayna's pseudo-soup recipes, ones she creates to distract her from life's disappointments. (If you're trying to figure out the significance of the title btw, "Gingersnap" is Jayna's nickname).

Celine, the landlady, gets a bit of a bad rap thanks to Jayna's perspective. I found Celine to have a bit of a hard exterior, true, but we later get little bits about her that suggest she feels deeply but struggles to be comfortable sharing what she feels with others... so it can come off as her being a little abrasive. Being the same way myself, I sort of understood her. That line when she sighs, "someday I'll get my life back..." Man, have I felt that on so many levels at various times throughout my life! Plus, I found her funny with her "almost genuine" Ming vase.

But it's also easy to feel for Jayna in this situation. Who wouldn't want to know the answers to the story of where they came from? Jayna can have her difficult moments too, but in the end, all these characters want the same thing: a cohesive, supportive, caring family unit... in whatever form that takes. This is another one of those great stories that illustrates how family can be made up of anyone you choose, blood or not. Sure, you can't choose who your blood relatives are, obviously, but outside of that, you can call whomever you like "family". It's an empowering thing, that realization!

Rose says

Initial reaction: Despite this being a very quick read and for a young audience, I had a very difficult time getting into this book. Not that I didn't appreciate the characters and the storyline, but it just didn't grab and hold me in several areas of the narrative. I'd like to explore more of the author's work, considering there were parts of this I did like, but overall, it didn't really leave an impression on me.

Full review:

I feel bad in penning this review because usually I love period fiction, I love YA and MG period fiction as well - but I'm not sure what to say about my experience reading "Gingersnap." The concept was great - about a young woman living in the 1940s. There are two distinct considerations here - one that "Gingersnap" (a.k.a. Jayna) is living with her landlord Celia after Jayna's brother Rob is sent off to war. Before he goes, he drops news that they may have a grandmother who's a cook and related to them, giving her a special blue cookbook. Jayna later learns that Rob may be MIA and sets off to Brooklyn to find her potential family because she feels like she needs to fill the void left from her brother's absence. She's helped along by a ghost who seems to have likenesses to her, but that ghost really didn't do much other than annoy me and could've been taken out of the story altogether for all the good that it did.

The narrative in "Gingersnap" didn't draw me in from the get-go and I had trouble following it, mainly because it felt so detached the whole time. It was like it moved from one plot point to the next with very little intimacy, even in such a brief piece. It was like a void of sorts. Sure the interactions between Jayna and her brother were cute to start, particularly aside from the stern, but well-meaning landlord, but I just couldn't find any point of identification with the main character, particularly in the moment when Jayna realizes that her brother's MIA - I would've thought it'd be given so much more weight than what it was. Even in works that focus mostly on slice of life and periodic elements, usually those have a richness in detail or periodic attention that allows you to immerse in the character's experiences or frame of mind. Here - it simply felt empty and didn't draw upon enough intimacy to count. I was very disappointed.

If there were elements that I did like about the book, the attention to cooking and the measure of that were intriguing and well presented, and the ending came across as sweet as well, but for a narrative that felt so sluggish even in its brevity for the majority of the book, I just couldn't love it as much as I wanted to.

Overall score: 2/5

Note: I received this as an ARC from NetGalley, from the publisher Random House BFYR.

Benjamin Torres says

Benjamin Torres

9/29/14

Period 3/4

Gingersnap

Gingersnap was a great book. I gave it 3 stars because it had good details in the chapter, but sometimes in the end of a chapter, there was a cliff hanger. Also, the character was amazing, brave, and generous, but tells more about her. There is a ghost with her. Tell more about him/her. Was he/she helpful? Was he/she curious.

Sarah says

This a nice audio book. A special salute to the young narrator, Olivia Campbell! She did an excellent job.

Virginia Walter says

Jayna's big brother Rob is her only family so when he joins the Navy, she is left in the care of their cranky landlady. She has a clue to her past, however, in the hand-written recipe book that belonged to her mother. She sets off to find the bakery whose name and address are in the book, hoping to learn more about her family. The answers are not what she expects, but she does make connections with people who love her and her brother when he comes home from the War in the Pacific. I enjoyed the soup recipes that appear with each chapter, but I don't think the ghost added much.
